

Field Naturalists Club of Ballarat *Incorporated*

EXCURSION - NEWS SHEET

Nov.4th. - Stell Bedggood Memorial Lecture by Dr.S.Garnett.

Meeting : Crocodiles and Crocodile Farming in N.Queensland.'

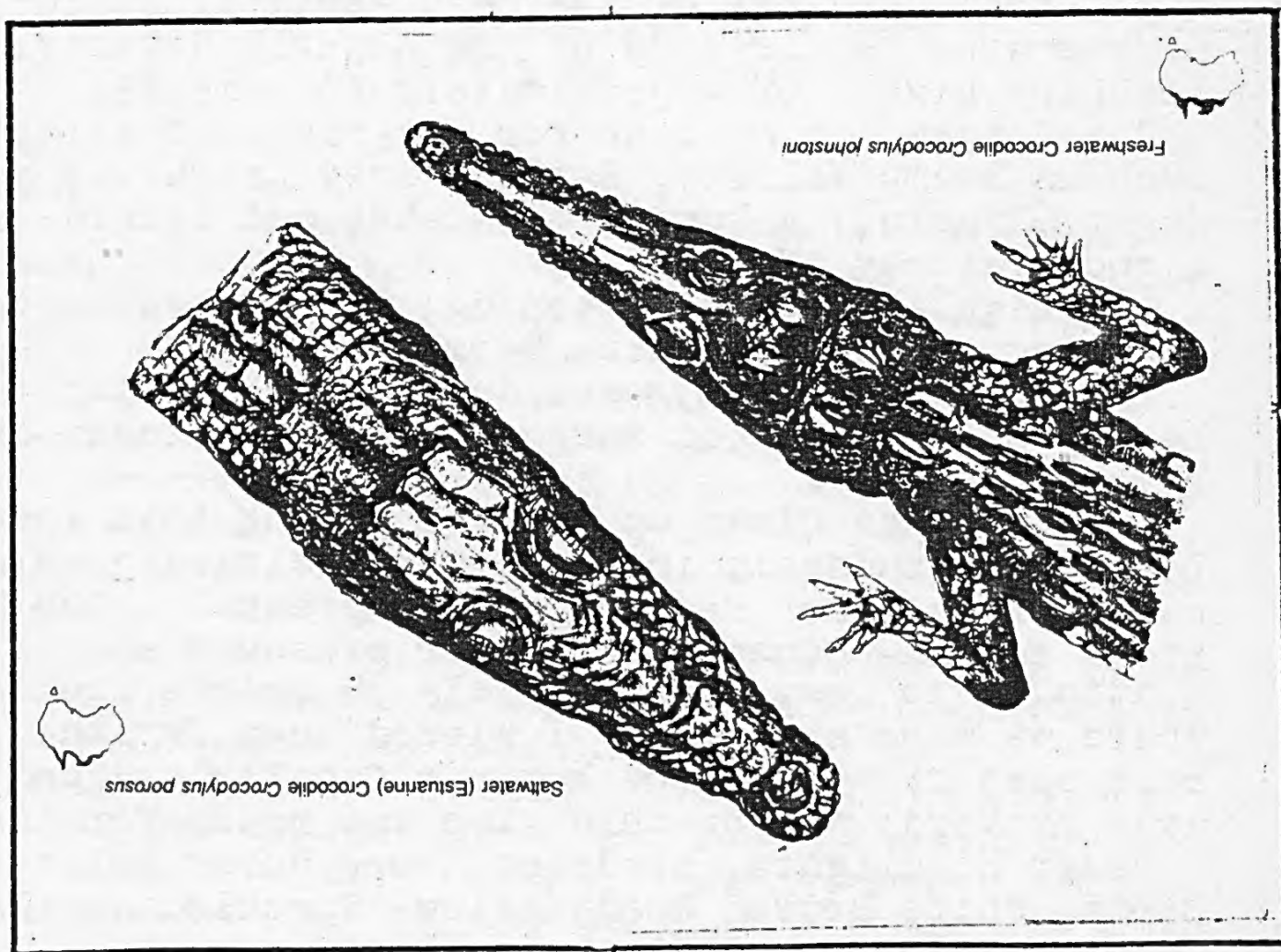
Venue; School of Mines Courthouse, 8p.m.

Meeting : Dec.2nd. - 'Barn Owls.' - Mr.J.McLaughlin.

Excursion : Nov.6th.- Mt.Beckworth - H.Burgess.

Excursion : Nov.19th. - Fell Gully and Clunes Swamps. G.Binns.

Dec.4th. - Slatey Creek - K.Hammond.



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Meetings as specified are held at the School of Mines and Industries, Lydlard Street Stn., Art Building, commencing at 7.30 p.m. EXCURSIONS, AS SPECIFIED, COMMENCE FROM CROCKERS, cnr. STURT AND ARM-STRONG STS., BALLARAT, at 9.30 a.m. for FULL DAY OUTINGS OR AT 1.30 p.m. for HALF DAY*

Five members of the club travelled to Wangaratta for the Annual Meeting most ably hosted by the N.E.F.N. Club. Steady rain fell throughout the night and Saturday morning dawned very grey and damp.

A convoy of some twenty or more cars left "The Centre" in Chisolm St. for the first part of our excursion into the Warbys.

The park extends 27 km's North from the town of Glenrowan; The 400 million year old granite range is only 300 to 400 metres above sea level, the highest point being Mt Glenrowan (514m) said to have been used by the Kelly Gang as a vantage point overlooking the town and surrounding country side.

There are magnificent views to the Victorian Alps, from here one of the most striking features of the area is the size of the Austral Grasstree reaching high of approximately four metres.

The Ranges are a haven for a variety of wildlife such as Swamp Wallaby, Eastern Grey Kangaroos and Sugar Gliders, a number of snakes and lizards and a good variety of birds.

The highlight of the morning, for me, was the sighting of the Turquoise Parrot.

The weather had improved during the morning to become quite warm and sunny, with big patches of bright blue sky.

I had almost given up hope of seeing this lovely bird, when suddenly in a sheltered clearing we came across them feeding on the ground. The birds seemed unconcerned at our presence and continued to feed approximately 30 metres from where we were standing. I viewed them for the best part of 15 minutes but was finally dragged away by Marj; who by this time was ready for lunch.

Other Highlights, birdwise, were Noisy Friar Birds, White Browed Woodswallow, Speckled Warbler, Red Cappe Robin and Mistletoe Bird.

After lunch we moved into the Killawarra Forest which consisted mainly of Ironbark, where we saw the painted and Yellow Tufted Honeyeaters, Noisy Friar Birds were also seen.

The speaker after the Annual meeting was Mr Arthur Hall who was a ranger at the Warby Ranges State Park and other nearby areas. He gave a most entertaining talk on not only the Warbys, but also a history of the Wangaratta area. Hume and Hovel first explored the area in 1824, but it wasn't until Thomas Mitchell passed through in 1836 that the area began to be settled. Arthur, who was born in the district, kept us entertained with his stories of the exploits of the Kelly Gang and the bushranger Dan Morgan, but he didn't forget the natural history of the Ranges. Apparently when the first settlers arrived the hills were covered with Murray Pine, but most of these were cut for building cabins and sheds, fence posts and furniture. He showed a dozen slides at the end of his talk, one being of a hole cut into a tree by a stone axe, it was, he thought, probably by an Aboriginal to get a possum.

A most interesting evening by a very well informed and easy to listen to speaker.

K.H.

Plants.

The Warby Ranges is the only place in Victoria where *Acacia triptera* (Spur-winged Wattle), Native to Central N.S.W., is found. There are magnificent stands of *Grevillea alpina* (Cat's Claw) over a metre high with large heads of yellow and red flowers.

In the three areas visited over the week-end a mauve haze filled the understorey and the air was perfumed with the aroma of *Arthropodium strictum* (Chocolate Lily). In the damp spots the purple *Utricularia dichotoma* (Fairies' Aprons) in their hundreds nodded in the breeze - always a delight to see. *Echium plantagineum* (Paterson's Curse) also gave a purple hue to both bush and farmland.

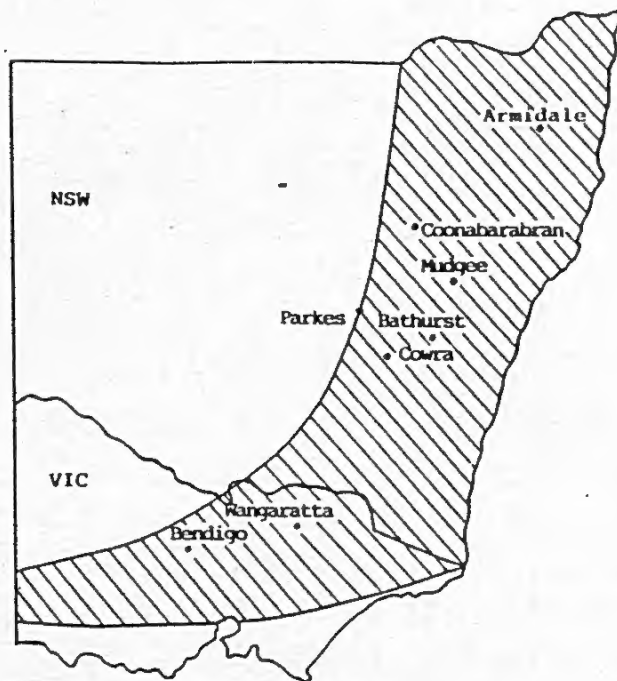
The yellow flowering plants were *Microseris scapigera* (Yam Daisy), *Gompholobium huelegii* (Karalla), *Hibbertia obtusifolia* (Grey Guinea-flower) and *Craspedia glauca* (Billy Buttons).

Burchardia umbellata (Milkmaid) was flowering well as was *Brachyloma daphnoides* (Daphne Heath) and the honeyed perfume was very evident. The *Calytrix tetragona* (Common Fringe-myrtle) had almost finished flowering but the long-awned calyces in various shades of 'red' were very attractive. The *Xanthorrhoea australis* (Austral Grass-trees), seen in the Ranges were about 4m. high, their impressive flowering spikes attracting butterflies, ants and other insects.

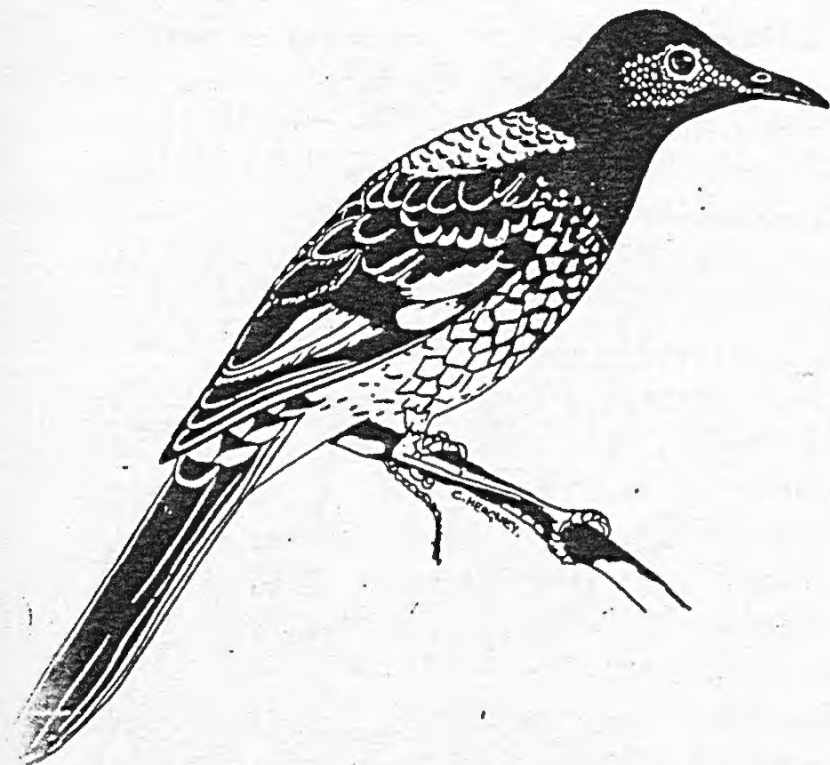
Amongst the orchids seen were Sun Orchids, mostly in bud, *Microtis unifolia* (Common Onion-orchid), *Calochilus robertsonii* (Purplish Beard orchid) and *Galeana major* (Large Duck-orchid).

WANTED!

THE REGENT HONEY EATER



Regent Honeyeater Distribution.



The brightly coloured Regent Honeyeater has rapidly disappeared over the last 30 years.

Only 35 birds have been found in New South Wales during the past five months, while it is estimated that as few as 200 still occur in Victoria.

The reason for its disappearance is unknown. Superficially their natural habitat - woodlands and forests occurring from Central Queensland to near Adelaide, has not changed. However, each year fewer and fewer birds have been seen.

Consequently, an ornithologist has been employed to:

locate more colonies of this bird; identify the types of habitat it uses in different seasons and record the bird's behaviour.

And that's where you can help. If you have seen any Regent Honeyeaters on your property or when travelling through the area shaded on the map please contact Greg Siepen on 02-5856447. You can even reverse the charges.

The survey is being conducted throughout the eastern half of New South Wales and the northern districts of Victoria.

From the little information available the Regent Honeyeater can be found feeding over the flowers of eucalypts, grevilleas (spider flowers) and mistletoes along with noisy friar birds, red wattlebirds and other smaller honeyeaters.

The Regent Honeyeater is thought to be migratory, moving north in autumn and winter and returning south to breed in spring where it will congregate where trees and shrubs are flowering profusely.

When feeding they fly swiftly from tree to tree, feeding aggressively and quickly in the outer foliage.

As well as nectar, honeydew, insects lerps and fruit are also eaten. Nesting The nest is made of bark strips bound with cobwebs to form a thick-walled cup. The inside of this nest measures 65 x 50 mm and is usually located in a thick vertical fork, upright forked branch or horizontal branch of tree or bush one to nineteen metres above the ground.

The female bird lays two or three small eggs (24 x 18 mm) of a red-buff colour.

IDENTIFICATION

A brilliantly coloured black-and-yellow honeyeater. Size = 200 mm. Head and neck coloured black with bare patches around the eyes. These patches can be yellow or red in colour. The black back and wings have conspicuous yellow patches. The tail is also coloured black and contains yellow outer feathers.

Botanical Notes.

Family Solanaceae.

Many members of this Family occurred originally in Central and South America e.g. potato, tomato, tobacco, and are now important agricultural crops.

Some species contain chemical substances used in the pharmaceutical industry.

There are a few plants belonging to the Family growing 'wild' near Ballarat. The potato is a major crop and most home gardeners grow tomatoes. The 'night-shades' and others are regarded as weeds.

The flowers are regular and bisexual. The calyx is persistent; the corolla is sympetalous (petals united at the edges to form a cup or tube). The stamens are attached to the corolla. The ovary is superior and usually contains numerous ovules. The fruits are fleshy or slightly dry berries.

The plants may be annual or perennial. They may be herbs, shrubs or small trees, glabrous or pubescent. Sometimes there are thorns or prickles!

H.H.

For your diary

- Nov.6th. - Sunday excursion to Mt.Beckworth. 1.30.meeting at Crockers.
Bring a picnic tea. Daylight saving has commenced!!
- Nov.19th. - Saturday excursion to the Clunes area; a full day's outing.
- Nov.22nd - Committee meeting at Dowling residence, Learmonth. Meet at
12,Pleasant St.Sth. at 7.30p.m.

BIRDWATCHING IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA WITH FRANK HARRAP

One of the areas of interest is the fact that a number of birds have been cutoff from the West and also Victoria. In 1977 to '81 there were 3000 observers and three birds stood out for their rarity (Western Whipbird, Western Yellow Robin and rufous Whistler.).

Some of the areas covered were Port Lincoln, Loxton, Flinders Ranges, Pinaroo, the Coorong, Robe and Seawards from Port McDonald.

The 1986 trip to Flinders Creek, Lake Gillies and the Coorong. Then in 1982 Loxton and Billiat Cons. Park and again in 1987 north of Pinaroo and Beepinga.

Into the Flinders Ranges to see the NEOPHEMAS, Blue winged and Elegants, both handsome birds, onto Lyndhurst to see the Thickbilled Grass Wren, others seen were Wedgebills, Cinnamon Quail Thrush and Red Throat. One of the birds seen was the Gibber Bird, North of Maree, and Inland Dotteral with young.

Then past Flinders Creek to Coopers Creek and the Eyrean Grass Wren country, they were seen very early and are mentioned only eighteen times in the Atlas by the Bird Observers, others seen were Woodswallows, White Browed, Masked, and Blackfaced, welcoming Spring. South of Maree, Pied Honeyeaters were seen next day. Back to the Flinders where it rained then West to Iron Knob where a Crimson Chat in full colour was seen, the only one.

Further on at Lake Gillies and some of the birds of Western Australia were seen, Yellow Thornbills not reported before, Western Yellow Robins nesting and differing from Eastern one(the bird shown) Rufous Tree Creeper, Port Lincoln Parrot, one of the three races of the White Browed Scrub Wren, Variegated Wren and Bluebreasted Wren.

The Coorong, a long thin National Park, one of the Birds there once were Ostriches, Cape Barren Geese, Pelican, Forest and Brush Bronze-wing, Southern Emu Wren, Striated Grass Wren and 5

cont.

the Rufous Bristlebird.

Then back to the Murray at Loxton and the nearby conservation Park nearby where Rufous Crowned Emu Wren, Striated Grass Wren and whistling Kites, red capped Robins Red Backed Kingfisher and others were seen.

This area was burnt out in Jan. 1988, is the home of the Red Lored Whistler, the Splendid Wren a truly beautiful bird, Gilberts Whistler and Red Lored Whistler.

Nearer to Pinaroo were Mallee Fowl. one of three birds that build a nesting mound, and Regent Parrots, Southern Scrub Robin, White Eared Honey-eater, Grey Butcher Bird, Yellowrumped Pardelote, Collared Sparrow, Hawk, White Backed Swallow, Spotted Nightjar just to mention the more interesting.

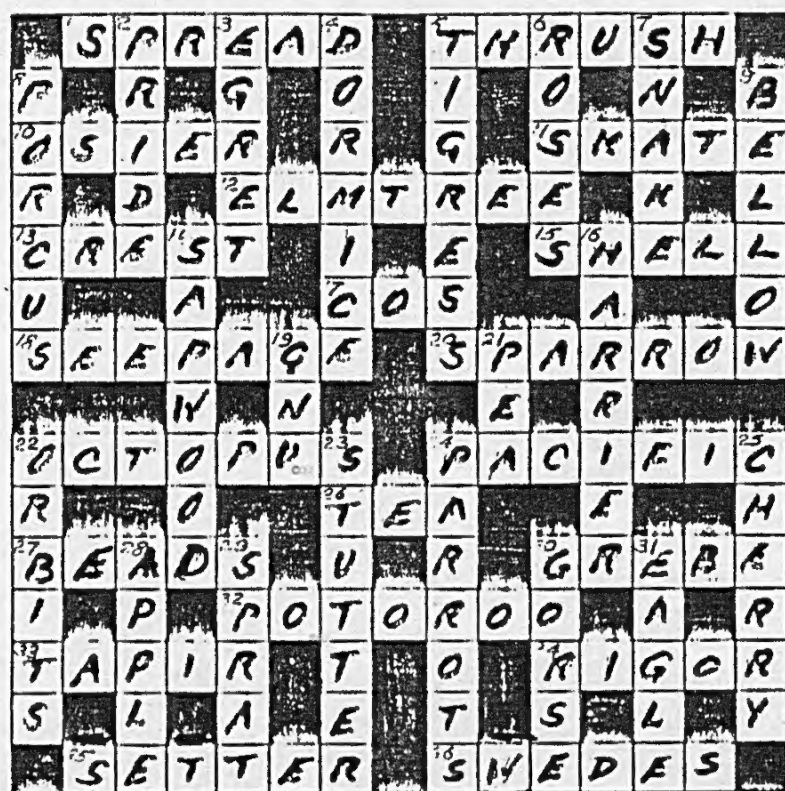
Ngarkat where Southern Bellbirds are fairly common, White Winged Triller, Little Cuckoo Shrike, and Regent Parrots.

Back to Peepinga and Pied Honeyeaters, Chestnut Quail Thrush and Letterwinged Kites.

At Comet Bore there were Whitefronted Honeyeater and Budgies.

This was a very interesting series of trips with many interesting birds(those named in the report were all shown on transparencies). Frank was thanked for his very interesting and informative evening.

L.F. Solution to No 10.



HADDON EXCURSION

On a bleak Spring day eight members met Ian Castle in the morning for the Saturday excursion.

Ian is an enthusiastic member of the Haddon community who, like us, is eager to learn more about the flora and fauna of the local bushland.

Our first stop was the Juniper Road Bushland Reserve, an undulating area of 16 ha. (approx. 40 acres). Ian had prepared a comprehensive plant list. We saw 6 species of orchid; the Sun Orchids being difficult to identify as many were in tight bud. The acacias had finished flowering but we were rewarded with masses of *Tetrathaca ciliata* (Pink Bells). Other plants flowering included *Daviesia virgata* (Narrow-leaf Bitter-pea), *Goodenia lanata* (Trailing Goodenia), *Leptospermum Mysinoides* (Heath Tea-tree), *Microseris scapigeri* (Yam Daisy), *Pimelea linifolia* (Slender Rice-flower), *Puntenaea gunnii* (Golden Bush-pea).

The recently dismantled railway line was our next stop. As it was rather exposed we were wind blown along the old track. *Pinus radiata* and *Banksia marginata* (Monterey pine and Silver Banksia) gave us some protection. The latter are old trees with little regeneration evident..

The verges of the old line are mainly grassland with a great variety of small plants.

For lunch we drove to the Candlebark area of the Common where the trees gave some protection from the strong, cold winds. A further six members joined us for the afternoon excursion as well as three of Ian's friends.

The Haddon Common has an area of 140 ha. (about 300 acres). and various organisations have an interest in it. As we walked around we were aware of the diversity of habitats with their accompanying flora.

The Eucalyptus species are *E. aromaphloia*, *dives*, *obliqua*, *radiata*, *rubida* and *viminialis* (Scent-bark, Broad-leaf Peppermint, Messmate Stringybark, Narrow-leaf Peppermint, Candlebark and Manna Gum). In the grass beside some *Leptospermum* a tightly curled Red-bellied Black Snake was innocently sunning itself. As a cry went up from the assembled crowd it quickly slithered into its burrow.

Beside the reservoir which, until a few years ago was the Haddon water supply, were dozens of *Banksia marginata*. Had the seed been deposited as the water receded and left a fine copse of this species? Old Man Banksia growing some metres away would have been nearly ten metres tall.

These areas are close to Ballarat and we all felt we should visit the area at another time of the year.

Thanks to Margaret who, despite the strong winds and overcast skies recorded 24 bird species:-

White-throated Tree-creeper
Brown-headed Honey-eater

Kookaburra
Magpie Lark

Magpie
Willy Wagtail

White-naped Honey-eater

Eastern Shrike-tit

Galah

White-winged Chough

Superb Blue Wren

Crimson Rosella

Haddon Excursion. (contd.)

Grey Shrike-thrush
Striated Thornbill
Striated Pardalote
Brown Falcon
Straw-necked Ibis (in flight)

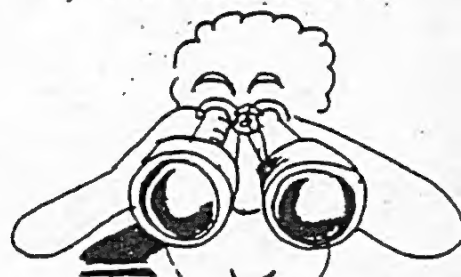
Rufous Whistler
Yellow-tailed Thornbill
Australian Raven
Grey Currawong

Yellow Robin
Grey Fantail
Welcome Swallow

Thanks to Ian for the plant lists and to Pat, the excursion leader, who enlightened us on the lesser known plants, particularly those which were 'down-on-the-knees' jobs.

(Helen Burgess.)

Helen also mentioned in her report sighting the tragedy of the Choughs and fishing line which was later reported in 'The Courier'. As a keen fisherman myself it brought home to me (again) how seemingly innocuous items which are carelessly discarded can be lethal to wildlife. (Fish swallowing aluminium cans' rip off tabs, water birds being poisoned by ingesting lead sinkers also spring to mind). Could I make an appeal to all who use our recreation areas and Reserves to use waste bins? Where these are not available surely it is not too much trouble for us to take our rubbish home and dispose of it there. Apart from the obvious visual pollution we must remember we do not know everything that may look attractive to our wildlife and cause untold and unknown harm. Ed.



Field Reports: October Meeting

- J.Gregurke At Anglesea Forest Park - Southern Emu-wren; 25 species of birds observed in half an hour.
- L.Fink From Kingston tour - much water in the outback of N.S.W. Vast areas of flowers including Sturt Desert Pea. Sightings of Pratincoles, Red Winged Kingfisher, Striped Honey-eater, W.I.Eagle in low tree(2m) - with young. Lake Mungo deep in clover. Many rabbits.
- S.Davison Brisbane Ranges - profuse wild flower growth - many orchids.
- P.Dalmain Princetown - pair of Mountain Duck in the surf with five ducklings.
- T.Barlow Mt.Helen - Y.T.Black Cockatoos flying over regularly. Pair rested in home garden for the first time.
- M.Christie Y.T. Cockatoos in Central Ballarat.
- H.Burgess Western Queensland trip - Thousands of R.T.Black Cockatoos in vicinity of Philip No.5 Well.
- G.Binns Murray River downstream of Berri - many Darters, Regent Parrots, Whistling Kites and Spoonbills nesting in river timber. Pied Butcher Bird with young Noisy Miner(?) in larder. Clunes Swamps - much nesting in progress particularly Swans, Swamphens, Seagulls, Cormorants, Herons, Y.Spoonbills and Ducks. 8 species of Duck recorded in one morning.
- A.Robinson Peregrine Falcon nesting at Devils Kitchen.

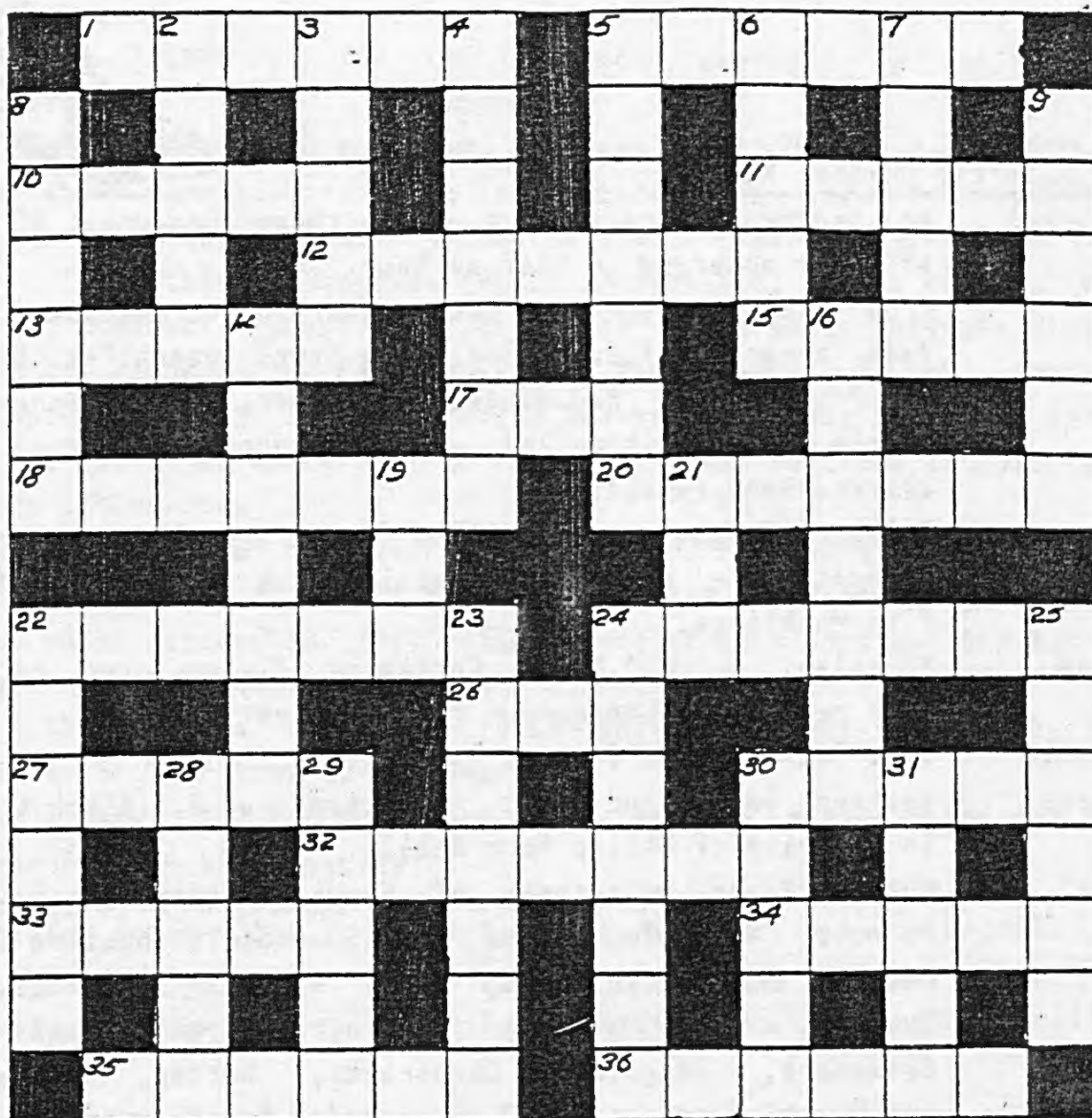
ACROSS

- 1 Cattle pest of Order Diptera (3-3) 5 Tui or ----- bird (6) 10 An inert gas (5) 11 It is NOT a bear (5) 12 Feline optic seen on road (4-3) 13 View (5) 15 Does this bird shoot from cover? 18 Position of limbs and body (7) 20 High mountains (3,4) 22 Zebras are (7) 24 Introduced Passerine (7) Does this bird also shoot? (5) 30 Yellowish fossil resin (5) 32 Lime trees (7) 33 Lions and horses are (6) 34 Ox stomach prepared as food (5) 35 Cartilaginous fish (6) 36 Member of Family Laniidae (6)

DOWN

- 2 Sea weeds (6) 3 Used as field boundary (5) 4 Wood from this prized by bowmen (3,4) Member of weasel Family (7) 6 Garden tools (5) 7 Central African ruminant (6) 8 Natural sauce (6) 9 Ships of the desert (6) 14 Relating to the coypu (7) 16 Pure spirit from sugar cane (4,3) 19 Evergreenshrub having medicinal value (3) 21 Rose fruit (3) 22 Small crustacean (6) 23 Members of species Dicruridae (7) Little rivers (7) 25 Game ----- looks after reserves (6) 28 Gold one is introduced (5) 29 Berry found in church (5) 30 Star shaped flower (5) 31 Involuntary eye movement (5)

NATURAL HISTORY CROSSWORD No 11



by

Tantalus